



Built Environmental Characteristics and Regulations Report

North Ridge South



Background

In early December, residents of the North Ridge South neighborhood in North Raleigh submitted a petition to City Council requesting consideration for a neighborhood built environmental characteristics and regulations analysis. This analysis is the first step in the potential creation of a Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District (NCOD). NCODs are zoning overlays that preserve and enhance the general quality and appearance of neighborhoods by regulating built environmental characteristics such as lot size, setbacks, residential density, building height, and vehicular surface area. NCODs generally apply more restrictive standards than base zoning districts. As stated in the citizens' petition, the intent behind the request is to maintain the current built character of the area and prevent subdivision of existing lots.

Per City Council's direction, Planning staff has completed an analysis of the particular built characteristics requested by the North Ridge South residents: lot size, lot frontage or lot width, front yard setback, and vehicular surface area. The petition also requested analysis of lot width at the building setback line, but this characteristic was removed from the analysis—with consent from the author of the petition—since the city's zoning code already requires that minimum lot widths extend for the entire depth of a parcel. This report presents results of the analysis.

Study Area Overview

The North Ridge South neighborhood is located in north Raleigh just south of the North Ridge Country Club. Nearby major streets include Falls of Neuse Road to the west, Rainwater Road to the east, and Spring Forest Road to the south. 132 properties, comprising nearly 80 contiguous acres, are included in the study area. These properties front on the following streets: Briar Patch Lane, Hedgelawn Way, Pony Run Road, Greystone Drive, Scotridge Court, Fairburn Court, Spring Run Circle, Woodhaven Court, and Horsepen Place (see Figure 1). The only use in the study area is single family residential, and the average lot size is close to half an acre. The majority of houses were constructed between 1971 and 1977. There is one vacant property (6817 Greystone Drive), and there are several properties with buildings either under construction or recently constructed (1201 and 1203 Hedgelawn Way and 6843 Greystone Drive). The zoning for all properties is Residential-6 (R-6) which allows up to 6 dwelling units per acre. R-6 also permits smaller lot sizes and lot widths compared to the current build-out of the neighborhood.

Although not required at this step in the process, the area does demonstrate initial compliance with the locational guidelines for areas to be rezoned to an NCOD:

- Minimum 15 contiguous acres: the requested study area is approximately 80 contiguous acres.
- Rezoning application must be signed by a majority of property owners: though this is required only at the rezoning stage, the citizens petition included signatures of support from over 100 property owners in the study area.
- At least 75% of the lots must be developed: there is only one vacant lot in the study area.
- Located in an area in which City Council has adopted specific neighborhood built environmental characteristics and regulations into Section 5.4.3.D of the UDO: though this guideline only applies at the rezoning stage, the residents have initiated the process of adopting specific built environmental characteristics and regulations into the UDO.

Figure 1. North Ridge South NCOD study area



Analysis

City code directs staff to assess properties within the study area for each of the built characteristics requested by residents. Specifically, the code asks staff to identify the “specific built environmental characteristics and regulations that reflect the predominant representation of the lots within the neighborhood study area.” In this context, “predominant” is defined as the metric for each characteristic that can be met by more than 75% of lots in the study area.

Using Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping tools, staff calculated the specific built characteristics—lot size, lot frontage, front yard setbacks, and vehicular surface area—that were requested by residents. Figure 2 summarizes the predominant values for these built characteristics and provides other relevant quantifiable information. For three of the characteristics—lot size, lot frontage, and front yard setback—the residents specifically requested analysis in terms of minimum values.

Stated simply, a minimum built characteristic can be thought of as an exclusive regulation, which encompasses values at the upper-end of the range and excludes those near the bottom. In this case, the minimum value identifies the lot size, lot frontage, and front yard setback held in common by just over 75% of properties that exhibit larger built characteristics (excluding properties in the bottom-quartile with the smallest built characteristics). In addition to these minimum predominant values, staff also provided analysis for the maximum predominant values, i.e. the maximum lot size, lot frontage, and front yard setback shared by just over 75% of the properties. For vehicular surface area, the residents requested analysis showing the maximum amount of vehicular surface area shared by just over 75% of the properties. The figures below highlighted in a darker color demonstrate predominant characteristics specifically requested by the petitioners.

Figure 2. Built environmental characteristics summary

Characteristic	Predominant Character (> 75 Percent) minimums	Predominant Character (> 75 Percent) maximums	Range (min-max)	Average	Median
Lot size	17,900 sq. ft.	23,450 sq. ft.	12,685 sf – 33,772 sq. ft.	21,675 sq. ft.	21,165 sq. ft.
Lot frontage	100 feet	125 feet	40 feet – 195 feet	114 feet	120 feet
Front yard setback	44 feet	66 feet	19 feet – 89 feet	55 feet	54 feet
Corner side yard setback	33 feet	48 feet	27 feet – 92 feet	47 feet	44 feet
Vehicular surface area	n/a	1,743 sq. ft.	559 sf – 4,044 sq. ft.	1,494 sq. ft.	1,304 sq. ft.



Although there is a fairly wide range of values for these characteristics, the fact that the minimum and maximum values—as well as the average and median figures—are close together shows that there is a relatively uniform development pattern in the area today.

Impacts

The predominant built character of this area differs from the minimum standards that currently apply under the R-6 zoning district (see Figure 3). Minimum lot size, lot frontage, and front yard setback standards are significantly smaller under the R-6 zoning. If new standards based on the predominant built character of the area were applied to this area through rezoning, the resulting NCOD would effectively prohibit the subdivision of existing lots currently allowed under the smaller minimum R-6 standards.

For the most part, the North Ridge South neighborhood is built out somewhere between the standards for a Residential-2 (R-2) district and a Residential-4 (R-4) district. Property owners may also wish to explore changing the base district zoning to better reflect the built character of the area. There are, however, drawbacks to rezoning to either of these districts instead of pursuing an NCOD. Residential-4 standards would still permit subdivision of some larger existing lots in the area. Residential-2 standards would render 51 properties non-conforming in terms of

minimum lot size. In addition, both of these districts allow significantly smaller front yard setbacks (20') than what would be required based on the built character (approximately 44').

In addition to restricting the opportunity to create smaller lots, an NCOD would impact changes to existing buildings and properties. Any additions, changes, expansions, or alterations to existing structures and impervious surfaces would have to comply with the overlay district regulations, or the property owner would have to apply for a special use permit with limitations on the amount of expansion. For example, a property owner seeking to expand vehicular surface area over the potential maximum standard of 1,743 square feet would have to obtain a special use permit through the city's Board of Adjustment. This non-compliant expansion would be limited in amount to no more than 25% of the total gross area of the vehicular surface area at the time the NCOD was first applied to the property.

Figure 3. Comparison of existing zoning standards and predominant built character

Characteristic	Current Standard (R-6 District)	Predominant Character (> 75 Percent)
Lot size (min)	6,000 sq. ft.	17,900 sq. ft.
Lot frontage (min)	50 feet (interior); 65 feet (corner)	100 feet
Front yard setback (min)	10 feet	44 feet
Corner side yard setback (min)	10 feet	33 feet
Vehicular surface area (max)	n/a*	1,743 sq. ft.

* Parking and driveway areas cannot take up more than 40% of the area between the front building line and the front property line (UDO Section 8.3.5.C.2).

Next Steps

A neighborhood meeting will be held on March 9 to discuss the results of this analysis. All property owners within the study area have been invited to attend. Following this meeting, city staff will present the results of the analysis and the neighborhood meeting discussion to City Council. Council will then decide whether to hold a public hearing to consider a text change to the UDO to incorporate these

neighborhood built environmental characteristics and regulations. If the text change is approved, property owners will then be able to petition for a rezoning to apply the built environmental characteristics and regulations to the North Ridge South area through an overlay district. A majority of property owners are required to sign the rezoning petition that would apply the NCOD.

